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ABSTRACT

This document consists of seven fact sheets that address issues and problems associated with child care. The first one provides background information regarding the availability of child care services in private homes and centers, statistical information on working parents requiring child care services, and numbers of associations and agencies available for resource and referral. The remaining six fact sheets discuss the following: (1) family day care, or home-based child care, as the major form of child care in the United States, its characteristics and regulation; (2) the federally supported Child Care Food Program in family day care; (3) umbrella sponsorship (a state or local non-profit organization servicing several homes) for family day care homes participating in the Child Care Food Program; (4) an overview of the child support enforcement problem, directed to mothers, giving information on who is eligible for child support, why fathers don't pay child support and what can be done about it, and how to work within the child support enforcement system; (5) information on how to start a grassroots child support action group; and (6) issues in the regulation of family day care. (AA)

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Background Information Regarding Child Care

The availability of child care providers is scarce. As a result, nearly 7 million children, one in every six, 13 years and younger are unsupervised for some portion of the day.

The United States is the only developed country that has no national child care policy. And at the state level budget allocations for child care were smaller in 1984 than in 1981. Yet, on the average 10 percent of a family's income is spent on child care costs.

Working Parents -- By 1990 approximately 23 million pre-schoolers will require child care services while their parents work.

Currently, an estimated 53.3 percent of mothers work outside the home. Approximately 46.8 percent of women with children under the age of one and 46 percent of mothers with children under three are in the labor force. Nearly 60 percent of women with children between the ages of three and five are in the workforce. A conservative estimate of 12 million mothers with children under six years old will be part of the work force by 1990.

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During 1984, 1 in every 4 mothers worked outside the home as the sole family wage earner. Two-thirds of women with preschool age children are in the workforce, either as the family's provider or supplementing a family income of $15,000 or less.

56 percent of all children had a mother who went out of the home to work during 1984. By 1990, 60 percent of school age children (17.5 million) will have mothers in the labor force.

A recent Census Bureau survey found that 45 percent of non-working mothers would enter the labor force if affordable child care was available.

Providers -- Nationally an estimated 1.5 to 2 million women work in their homes as child care providers servicing more than 6 million children. Two-thirds of all out of home child care is performed by home-based child care workers. Home based providers account for 80 to 90 percent of infant care.

While an estimated 6.2 million children are in child care (80 percent), only 900,000 are cared for in licensed day care centers. Over 5.3 million children are placed in family day care homes. Only 142,000 of these homes are licensed.

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70-75 percent of family child care providers remain unregulated. Although 44 states have some form of registration, often providers with 4 or fewer children are not required to register. However, most homebased providers are not registered due to burdensome licensing practices or discriminatory zoning laws.

Earnings for underground providers are less than one-third the minimum wage. Further, unregistered providers are unable to secure access to such services as food nutrition programs, training seminars, and referral listings.

If a provider is underground, a parent's eligibilty for the child care tax credit under the "Economic Recovery Act of 1981" may be jeopardized. Data shows that in 1984, 6.4 million families utilized the dependent care tax credit, making the credit the largest child care benefit.

Miscellaneous

* Inquiries related to infant care constitute 60 percent of resource and referral calls; in some cities the figure is as high as 80 percent.

* Only 11 states require child care training as a prerequisite for licensing.

* In response to the need for increased availability to quality child care several activities have occurred. For example in 1981 The National Association of Family Day Care Providers was established. The Association has over 1,350 members, produces a quarterly newsletter, and hosts a bi-annual conference.

* One hundred and thirty statewide child care associations are known to exist. That number is expected to increase during the next few years.

* Nationally there are over 500 resource and referral agencies which help parents locate quality child care. However, the demand for child care outweighs the supply of providers.

* Congress has advanced several child care proposals, but to date no bills have been passed.

For more information contact: Maribeth Oakes, Project Director
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August, 1985

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FACT SHEET ON FAMILY DAY CARE

Family Day Care is the major form of child care that is continuing to expand to meet the growing need for affordable, quality care.

Family Day Care is home-based child care -- provided almost always by a women in her own home -- for six or fewer children. Currently, more than 1.5 million women in this country provide home-based care to more than five million children, some 70% of the children in fulltime care. These providers offer important benefits such as flexible hours, close proximity to a child's home, a home-like environment and small group size. Family day care generally also costs less than half that of center-based care.

Family day care is particularly appealing because children receive individualized attention. Special needs of infants or children with disabilities or of parents who work late shifts can more easily be met. Since nearly half the mothers of children under two years old are in the work force, the demand for infant care is burgeoning. For infants, family day care is overwhelmingly preferred by parents.

Providers of family day care are generally low and moderate income women who come to their profession with a wide variety of skills and training. They are small businesswomen -- NOT babysitters --a stereotype that haunts them. From the point of view of the community, family day care providers are important because they are self-employed, self sufficient and offer a critically needed service to their neighbors.

The regulation of family day care continues to be a policy issue that engenders great debate. Despite requirements in more than 40 states that family day care homes be licensed, certified or registered by a state agency, fewer than 10% are so regulated. State licensing standards have often reflected noble but unrealistic goals. Rather than encourage providers to come forward in order to gain access to information and training, strict and forbidding licensing and zoning requirements have pushed providers underground. The laws are changing. Some states have already moved from licensing to less burdensome forms of regulation. Ultimately, it is parents who must take responsibility for monitoring the standards and quality of care that their children receive.

Locating family day care homes continues to be a pr[illegible]em. Parents should call the local Department of Health and Hu[illegible]n Services and check the telephone book for family day car[illegible]ssociations, Information and Referral services or child care c[illegible]ers. Some of the best homes belong to associations or nonprof[illegible] systems connected with day care centers or other private social s[illegible]vice agencies. Information and Referral Systems, which may or may not provide information and training to providers, help parents to fi[illegible]d family day care in their neighborhoods. Providers often advertise independently in local newspapers or on community bulletin boards.

For some children in family day care government support is available. The local Department of Human Services has information about eligibility and assistance. Both child care costs and food costs can be totally or partially subsidized.

The Children's Foundation, a national advocacy organization for women and children, has been providing information, training and organizing help to those interested in family day care since 1976.

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FACTS ABOUT THE CHILD CARE FOOD PROGRAM

IN FAMILY DAY CARE

With more than 50% of mothers of preschool age children currently in the work force, obtaining affordable, quality child care is a major concern for working families throughout the country. Family day care is by far the most frequently used form of care and continues to expand to meet the demands of the market.

The Child Care Food Program is the single largest federal support for family day care. By serving nutritious meals and snacks to more than 300,000 children in home-based care on a daily basis, CCFP helps to ensure quality care. The program provides information and training to more than 70,000 enrolled providers and is administered nationwide by over 700 non-profit sponsoring organizations.

With close to one million children participating in the program overall, family day care represents a little more than 30% of the total participants. The remaining 700,000 participants are located in day care centers or Head Start programs.

WHO BENEFITS FROM THE PROGRAM?

Children

For the more than 300,000 children in day care homes that participate in the program daily, CCFP provides nutritious meals and snacks. Good food and proper nutrition has been shown to be an important factor in the physical and intellectual development of young children. With more than 3/4 of all infants in out-of-home care, currently cared for in family day care homes, the program has added significance.

Providers

Family day care providers enrolled in the program receive ongoing training, nutrition education, and regular monitoring by the administrative arm of the program, the non-profit umbrella sponsors.

Parents

Parents whose children are enrolled in family day pro-
grams that participate in C.C.F.P., know that their chi n are
receiving balanced and nutritious meals and snacks. Pa s bene-
fit from providers' expertise in health and nutrition. hild's
good eating patterns in day care often carry over to his r home life.

C.C.F.P. HAS HAD A FAR REACHING IMPACT ON THE FAMILY DAY CARE PROFESSION

- C.C.F.P. has unquestionably been the most success l pro-gram to assist in the development and organizatio of the family day care profession. With close to 60,000 omes currently participating in the program, it is the single largest day care "system" in the country.

- C.C.F.P. has been responsible for upgrading the family day care profession by offering training and technical assistance to providers enrolled in the program. This has been particularly important in light of recent federal and state cutbacks in training funds for family day care.

- C.C.F.P. helps to ensure quality child care by carefully monitoring all participating homes two to three times per year. With increased numbers of women entering the profession, but fewer dollars available to monitor and regulate day care homes, the visits made by sponsors to the homes are an important way for both parents and providers to maintain high standards for their programs.

- C.C.F.P. has been largely responsible for bringing unregulated providers into the regulatory system. Because providers must meet state regulatory requirements in order to participate in the program, the program has had a significant impact in helping to bring home day care up from underground. This is important because increased numbers of regulated providers also expand access for parents seeking care!

CURRENT PROPOSALS TO REINSTITUTE A MEANS TEST FOR C.C.F.P. WOULD HAVE DISASTEROUS CONSEQUENCES FOR FAMILY DAY CARE

- A means test for family day care homes participating in the program prior to 1980 was eliminated after it was found to be an administrative nightmare. The cost of administering the program with a means test was excessive. The burdensome amount of paperwork that was created under the former system caused significant administrative problems and financial hardships.

- Family day care has already been hard hit by C.C.F.P. cuts! Two years ago, a meal and a snack were eliminated from the program. Administrative costs were also cut. To reinstitute a means test during a time when federal support for day care has been cut by close to 30% would adversely impact on parents, providers, and most importantly, children in care.

- The availability of C.C.F.P. to family day care providers has been documented to be a determining factor in whether or not a provider chooses to become regulated. With more than 75% of the profession currently underground, it is obvious that more incentives are needed to encourage providers to participate in the broader professional and regulatory system. C.C.F.P. provides just that! Without the program, many providers, unable to charge higher fees in order to cover increased food costs, will simply be unable to comply with regulatory standards, and will go underground.

- Family Day Care Providers, whose earnings average between $1.12 and $1.42 per hour, cannot afford the cost of feeding children nutritious meals out of their own very limited income. The program currently supplements rather than subsidizes their feeding costs, with providers often incurring out-of-pocket expenses of 25% more than U.S.D.A. reimbursement rates.

THE SUCCESS OF THE PROGRAM HAS BEEN WELL DOCUMENTED

- A study commissioned by the Department of Agriculture to evaluate the program and conducted by ABT Associates in 1982 found that "the results ... indicate quite clearly that the C.C.F.P. is meeting its goal of providing nutritious meals to children in day care".

- A Family Day Care Survey of C.C.F.P. conducted by the Northeast State Directors and Child Care Food Program Coordinators concluded that the primary goal of the program, to provide nutritious meals and snacks to children in day care, has been achieved in, "a dramatic and successful manner". Their findings, however, went beyond the initial objectives of the program, as they examined the economic benefits of the program to both parents and providers. "The availability of C.C.F.P. funds has enabled many providers to remain in operation and to keep their fees at an affordable level. The accessibility of affordable day care has freed many families from low income status."

A SURVEY CONDUCTED BY THE CHILDREN'S FOUNDATION IN 1982 OF A REGIONALLY REPRESENTATIVE GROUP OF C.C.F.P. SPONSORS ATTESTED TO THE IMPACT AND IMPORTANCE OF C.C.F.P.:

- "The C.C.F.P. is the greatest program ever developed to educate day care providers, parents and children." (Great Falls Day Care Association, C.C.F.P. Sponsor, Great Falls, Montana)

  "We found from a survey that we did of providers and parents that 94% of parents could not pay higher costs of day care and 97% of providers on the program would have to raise their price without C.C.F.P." (Child Nutrition Program of San Diego, California)

- "This program has been a godsend for most providers, working mothers, and participant children. Approximately 45% of our providers live in public housing and this program, in many instances, has meant the difference between many of them not getting on welfare. Many mothers would not be able to work if it were not for C.C.F.P. With many of them working for minimum wage, if they had to pay someone for both feeding and caring for their children, they would probably end up in the hole. They may feel it more feasible to get on welfare and keep their own children." (West Alabama C.C.F.P., Inc., Tuscaloosa, Alabama)

- "Many of our providers are single parents and depend on their day income for their livelihood. These women are able to remain at home with their children and bring in an income. The food reimbursements helps them to live independently with pride." (Russell Child Development Center, Garden City, Kansas)

WE URGE YOU TO DEFEAT ANY LEGISLATION THAT WOULD JEOPARDIZE THE AVAILABILITY OF C.C.F.P. TO THE THOUSANDS OF CHILDREN, PROVIDERS, AND PARENTS THAT BENEFIT FROM THE PROGRAM EACH DAY!

This fact sheet on C.C.F.P. was prepared by The Children's Foundation.

For more information, contact: Maribeth Oakes
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Child Care Food Program

Umbrella Sponsorship
for
Family Day Care Homes

A FACT SHEET FROM THE CHILDREN'S FOUNDATION

The Child Care Food Program (CCFP), part of the National School Lunch Act, offers cash reimbursements and donated commodities to child care facilities that serve food. The Food Program promotes well balanced meals for pre-school children attending out of home care. Children receive two meals and one snack per day. Amounts and types of food vary according to a child's age, yet all meals must meet nutrition guidelines.

Nationally the Program is administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). At the state level the program is governed by the Department of Education or another state agency. In nine states, however, the USDA administers the program through its Food and Nutrition Service Regional Offices (FRNSO's).

What is a Family Day Care Home Umbrella Sponsor

An umbrella sponsor is a state or local non-profit organization that services several homes participating in the CCFP. Any tax-exempt, non-profit agency, licensed center or community program may apply for umbrella sponsorship. Organizations moving toward compliance for tax-exempt status may also become sponsors.

Since 1975, when the CCFP was amended by Public Law 94-105, licensed or approved family day care homes are eligible for program participation under program sponsorship. Where licensing or approval is not available, providers meeting USDA standards can be a part of the CCFP.

Currently over 80,000 family day care providers participate in the CCFP, providing meals to about 320,000 children.

Sponsor Reimbursement

For directing the program an umbrella sponsor receives monthly reimbursements from its state agency or USDA regional office. Reimbursement amounts are based upon the number of providers under the sponsor, multiplied by the administrative rate for each home. From July 1985 through June 30, 1986 the rates are:

- 1-50 homes, equals $50 per month per home
- 51-150 homes, equals $38 per month per home
- 151-800, equals $30 per month per home
- over 800 homes, $26 per month per home

Sponsors must submit reimbursement claims to the state or regional agency within 60 days of the month ended. Payment on valid claims must be made within 45 days from the date the claim is received.

Provider Reimbursement

Each month providers complete the appropriate forms and are in turn reimbursed by the umbrella sponsor. Payment amounts depend upon the number of meals and snacks served during the month, multiplied by the reimbursement rate. (The reimbursement maximum can not exceed two meals and one snack per child per day.) Current rates per child are: 57 cents for breakfast; $1.11 3/4 for lunch, and 33 1/4 cents for snacks.

Umbrella Sponsor's Responsibilities

In addition to providing information and technical assistance to providers the umbrella sponsor must complete all administrative work required for food reimbursement claims. A sponsor must maintain financial and administrative oversight for homes participating in the CCFP, including records of:

- program application and supporting documents
- invoices, receipts, and other cost documentation
- income sources, ie, Title XX or local monies
- payment and claims receipts from state or regional offices
- provider payment receipts, including date and amount
- training session information, including dates, location, topics presented, and names of workshop participants
- copies of home license, registration, or approval statement

- records of each home's menus and attendance sheet
- documentation of every child's enrollment in a home

Further, sponsoring organizations must:

- visit child care homes to observe food service operation
- institute before and after enrollment training sessions for providers and sponsor organization staff training
- submit monthly claims to state administering agency or USDA regional office
- renew and submit program application annually

Provider's Responsibilities

- serve meals that meet USDA requirements
- submit monthly attendance and menu forms
- sign written agreements with sponsor organization
- reapply annually for program participation

Program Benefits

- Advance Payments: Sponsors may receive administrative and/or food payments in advance. Some sponsors may be eligible to receive advance payment for two months.
- Start-up Payments: Funds are available to prospective sponsors who meet all eligibility requirements for recruitment and training of program participants.
- Commodities: Sponsoring organizations have the option to receive either commodities or cash-in-lieu of commodities for meals served.
- Fair Hearing Procedures: Sponsors who question state agency decisions regarding program suspension or termination, claims reimbursement denial, and/or overpayment demands are entitled to a hearing. Written appeals and hearing guidelines are available.

How to Apply to Become an Umbrella Sponsor

Applications for becoming an umbrella sponsor are available from the State Department of Education or USDA Regional Office. When requesting an application, also ask for other resource materials, including:

- CCFP law (P.L. 95-627) and regulations
- state Requirements and Fair Hearing Procedures
- sample reporting forms

You will also need,

The names and telephone numbers of the state or regional office staff who are responsible for different aspects of the program, as well as the name and phone numbers of CCFP sponsors located in your immediate area.

For more information on CCFP contact: Maribeth Oakes, Director National Family Day Care Advocacy Project. (202) 347-3300

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C H I L D S U P P O R T

- AN OVERVIEW OF THE CHILD SUPPORT ENFORCEMENT PROBLEM -

A F A C T S H E E T F O R M O T H E R S

Who Is Eligible To Receive Child Support Payments?

All children are due financial support from their fathers.

A court order establishes how much support is due, when, and how it is to be paid. Payments may go directly to the child's mother or through the court. When a family is receiving welfare payments, however, any child support collected is "assigned to" -- that is, turned over to -- the state.

Between 3 and 4 million families in the U.S. are supposed to receive child support payments from absent fathers.

Do Most Fathers Pay Child Support?

No. The highest estimates are that less than half of court-ordered child support is actually paid.

Between 1/4 and 1/3 of fathers who are ordered to pay support never make the first payment. Nowhere do more than half pay the full amount.

One professional has said that less than 10% of child support payments are made in full and on time.

What Happens To The Family When Child Support Isn't Paid?

The full burden of keeping the children housed, fed and clothed falls on their mother -- who can only expect to earn about 60% of a man's salary. The result is that about half of the children who live only with their mothers live in poverty.

Even families who were comfortably middle-class before a divorce can be plunged into poverty almost overnight when child support isn't paid.

For millions of mothers, child support payments make the difference between having to turn to welfare or not. When this happens, the public is taking over the father's responsibility to his children.

For others, late payments and/or partial payments keep the children's family in continuous economic chaos.

A 1980 study of 3,000 divorces found that one year after a divorce, the average man's standard of living had risen by 42%. Meanwhile, the standard of living of his children and their mother had fallen by 73%.

Why Don't Fathers Pay Child Support?

Millions of fathers don't pay child support because they just don't have to -- not much happens to them when they don't.

Fathers say they can't afford it. Research shows that not only CAN most fathers pay their child support, they can usually pay MORE than the court has ordered. Wealthy fathers are about as likely to be delinquent as poor fathers.

Fathers say that the needs of their "new family" come first. Divorced men do remarry more often and more quickly than divorced mothers with children. But a father taking on new responsibilities doesn't erase the ones he already has to children he already has.

Fathers say they don't pay because they can't visit their children as much as they want to. The children's needs for food, clothing and shelter are not changed by whether their parents agree on visitation. Child support and visitation are two separate issues.

Fathers move away. The mother may not be able to find him at all when payments suddenly stop coming. If he moves to another state, things can get complicated very quickly. If he keeps moving, it's even worse.

Laws view child support as a serious matter -- but they aren't enforced by the courts. Fathers CAN be jailed for nonpayment of child support. They can have their wages, tax refunds and other property attached. But if these laws were being enforced, then half of America's children -- that percentage likely to live only with their mothers at some point -- wouldn't face this high risk of poverty.

What Is The Child Support Enforcement System?

The child support enforcement system is complicated but it's important for you to understand enough about it to decide what it can and can't do for you.

The Office for Child Support Enforcement (OCSE) is the federal government agency set up in 1975 to help locate absent parents, establish paternity and collect child support. OCSE supervises an agency in each state called the "IV-D agency".

The IV-D Agency in each state is usually part of the welfare or human resources department. It is supposed to provide services to welfare and nonwelfare families. It operates a Parent Locator Service to find fathers who have "disappeared". It also works to establish paternity legally and get court orders for support when such orders haven't been part of a separation agreement or divorce.

URESA stands for Uniform Reciprocal Enforcement of Support Act. Every state has URESA laws which are supposed to ensure that court ordered child support can be enforced if a father moves to another state.

The court system in each state is also involved -- every state has child support laws and the courts are there to see that these laws are obeyed.

Private lawyers can sometimes help. When a mother goes directly to the court for help or files a URESA action, the state's attorney represents the children's interests.

Why Doesn't The Enforcement System Work?

Laws differ from state to state. Some states are much more effective than others. Generally, the effective states are the ones that require child support payments to be deducted from a father's wages, that follow up right away if a payment is missed and that jail fathers who don't pay.

Nonwelfare cases are not a priority to the IV-D agencies. The IV-D agencies are state agencies and must provide services to all state residents. However, the state gets to keep money collected from fathers of children on welfare. Money collected from other fathers goes to the family. Therefore, there's not much advantage to the state to pursue nonwelfare cases. Also, the IV-D agency is allowed to charge nonwelfare mothers a fee for its services and these fees in some states can be as high as a private lawyer would charge.

Parent Locator services (run by the IV-D agencies) charge the mother a fee, may take months and are not always successful. Some areas have good locator services, some don't. All cost money and can take a lot of time.

Many states are passive about URESA cases. After the mother has filed a URESA petition in her state's court, many months can go by before a hearing in the father's state. If he moves again -- even to another county -- she has to start all over. Also, the amount of the support order may be changed, since when there is a hearing the father will be there to "plead poverty", while the mother and children are represented in court by an often overworked and perhaps uninterested state attorney who has never even talked to them.

Judges often don't impose penalties for nonpayment. Though non-payment of child support is a crime, crimes that go unpunished tend to be repeated. Judges can also "forgive arrearages" -- that is, say that overdue payments never have to be paid.

Taking action is left up to the mother in most cases. Many mothers just give up. They can't keep taking time off work to go to court hearings. They don't understand the complicated enforcement system and are intimidated by the idea of going to court. They don't have the money to hire a lawyer. Only in a few places does the court itself keep track of what support is being paid and take action automatically when it's not.

IN MOST PLACES, IT'S UP TO YOU!

B E Y O U R O W N A D V O C A T E !

The enforcement system is there to help you and is supposed to help you -- but you're the one who has to fight for your children.

Call your IV-D Agency. Explain your situation factually and ask what they can do, how long it takes and how much it will cost you.

Call your court directly. In some areas, it works just as well to go directly to the court as to go to the IV-D agency. Ask the same questions about what they can do, when, and what the possible outcomes are. Also ask what documents you need to bring with you -- like a copy of your court order for support, your divorce, your rent receipts and other evidence of your expenses, records of child support payments made and those overdue, and any information you have about the father's whereabouts, social security number and financial resources.

You may or may not want a lawyer. Some mothers hire a lawyer and are successful. Others report months of trusting a lawyer's assurances without results. Many lawyers aren't interested in these cases unless it's on a contingency basis -- meaning they keep a third or more of any support collected. You may not feel right about bartering away a third of what your children's father owes them. Or you may decide that's the only way they'll get any of their support money.

Don't accept a lawyer telling you there's nothing you can do -- at least not until you understand the system and your own situation well enough to know why that may be true.

Consider representing yourself in court. You have to know what you're doing and you might feel scared about handling your own case in court, but many mothers have learned what was necessary to proceed with the legal steps on their own.

You don't need a lawyer to file a URESA petition! Call your court and do it yourself. Generally, the mother takes the court order and other information to a court counselor and fills out a standard form stating the facts of her situation. She then swears that the information is true in a usually very brief and informal hearing before a judge. Her court then sends the paperwork to the court which has jurisdiction over the father, asking that court to enforce the support order. Sometimes URESA works. Often it doesn't. It's wise to find out how "good" the other state is with URESA matters, and you may want to consider hiring a lawyer there to represent you when there's a hearing.

Keep track of your case, especially a URESA case. Your paperwork can sit in a file for months while you assume that things are moving along.

> Develop a working relationship with (1) your court worker and (2) the court or IV-D worker in the other state.
>
> Keep records of whom you've talked to and when, what was said and what's been done.
>
> Don't call so often that you're seen as a "pest", but don't be so uninvolved that your case is one of the ones it's easiest to file away. It's true that court and IV-D workers are overworked -- but you want your case to be one of the ones they're overworking on.

Try to locate a "disappeared" father yourself before turning to the Parent Locator Service. Check out all your own leads; ask for help from your grassroots group. The Parent Locator Service takes time, costs money and doesn't make any guarantees about finding him. Use your phone and use your head!

Don't let nonpayment ride too long. Amounts unpaid tend to remain forever unpaid. Also, if you're trying to locate him, fresh trails are better than stale ones.

Don't fear losing your children. Nonpaying fathers commonly threaten to "take the kids if you can't handle them on your own." The court decides custody matters.

Don't feel guilty for seeking enforcement of child support orders. Again, the court, not you, has determined that this money should be paid to meet your children's needs. The court, not you, decides on punishments for nonpayment.

Do keep accurate records. Don't just trust your memory -- write things down! Keep records of amounts and dates of payments made and payments not made. Also keep records of your child-related expenses -- housing, food, clothing, medical bills, incidentals.

Untangle emotional issues from financial and legal ones. Child support problems certainly have emotional as well as economic effects. But remember that people working in the enforcement system have to work with your facts, not your feelings. You might feel that the court or IV-D agency "just doesn't care". It doesn't matter if they seem to care or not -- what you want from them is effective action. Look to others -- friends, family, your grassroots group -- for caring.

Be prepared for the problem to continue. Child support problems tend to be recurrent. Learn all you can about why your support problems exist, the different things you can do and what the possible outcomes are.

Analyze the father's motivations, too. Sometimes nonpayment of child support serves to let a father feel he can control you. One mother started getting support payments regularly when she began contacting the father at work instead of at home -- it turned out that it was very important to him that his coworkers not know he didn't pay. Think it through.

Join the grassroots group in your area -- if there's not one, start one. We will help you find the nearest group or help you start one if there isn't one. Grassroots groups are very important -- they provide:

- information and feedback on laws, court systems, different attorneys;
- valuable experiences, tips and support from mothers who've been through what you're going through;
- a way to increase public awareness of how very serious a problem child support enforcement has become in our country;
- a way to make local and state judges, officials and lawmakers aware of the gaping holes in the enforcement system; and
- a powerful means of getting stronger laws passed by working together with other groups across the nation.

DON'T GIVE UP! Your children's father owes them his financial support. His paying child support can determine whether or not those children grow up in poverty.

Worth Cooley
January, 1985

THE CHILDREN'S FOUNDATION
815 Fifteenth Street, N.W., Suite 928 • Washington, D.C. 20005
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Barbara Bode
President

CHILD SUPPORT ACTION

HOW TO START A GRASSROOTS GROUP

WHAT DOES A GRASSROOTS GROUP DO?

Shares information:

Every one of you has valuable information about the child support system in your area. Sharing these experiences means we don't have to reinvent the wheel each time somebody needs to go somewhere.

Provides support:

Child support struggles are painful, demoralizing, and draining. Nobody knows that like another mother who's been there. Just being able to do something can pull you out of an emotional corner. Sharing time and effort with women who are fighting the same battles can be a source of real strength for all of you.

Analyzes the system:

When you combine the successes and failures mothers have had with what you learn about how the system is supposed to work, you get a clear picture of the ways the system does work and the ways it doesn't. Once that's clear, then you can focus yourselves on what needs changing.

Changes things:

Just a few people working in unison can have far greater impact than large groups responding passively to the same issue. Determined, concerted, organized action is a powerful way to make others aware of the problems, and force the system to change.

HOW DO THESE GROUPS GET STARTED?

By women like you! Certainly men can be involved in these groups, too, but we say "women" because that's who usually faces this particular problem.

Just as each of you faces a somewhat different legal and financial situation, each grassroots group will be different, too. Here are some basic steps that any group can follow in getting started.

IS THERE A NEED IN YOUR AREA?

If there are any single mothers around, there's a need. But there may already be a grassroots group in your area, and you should make efforts to find out first.

Call people who might know of such a group. And keep a good list of who you've called. If there's not a group, you'll want to call these people back and let them know about the one you are starting. Then when another mother like you calls them, they'll have an answer.

Places to call: court counselors, child support enforcement agencies (IV-D offices), women's counseling centers, local chapters of women's groups like NOW, hotlines, social service organizations. Also get in touch with one of the larger national child support groups. Even if they don't know of a group in your area, they may have heard from other women who, like you, want to start one. In addition, we at The Children's Foundation are busy compiling a national directory of child support enforcement advocacy groups that will become available by the fall of this year.

If you discover that there is a group in your area, join forces with them. You may find, though, that the focus of an existing group is different from what you believe is needed. For instance, some groups aim mostly at changing state laws and really don't have time for practical issues on the individual level, like how to deal with an interstate petition (URESA) in a particular court system. Other groups do focus on helping mothers with their own situations, but don't get actively involved in political caucuses. BOTH KINDS OF GROUPS ARE IMPORTANT! One of the saddest things we can do is undermine each

other's efforts. Nonpaying parents and the courts and the rest of the system do that well enough. Respect groups whose focus is different, network with them, and work in concert when possible. No one group can "own" this issue.

WHAT NEXT?

Form a core group for planning. You can do this all alone, but if you've found another mother or two, that's better.

The core group will carry out the next steps. Expect a lot of phone calling, poster making, night and weekend meetings. Get your kids involved if they're willing -- this is really a family project.

SET TIME AND PLACE FOR THE FIRST MEETING

Set a time far enough in advance to allow for publicity, but not months away or you'll lose steam. Consider holidays, school schedules, and other factors that would influence whether or not you as a single mother would go to a child support group meeting.

When you've got the date pretty much chosen, find a place. Think about cost (free is best), transportation, comfort and child care arrangements. Many public places have meeting rooms available -- libraries, neighborhood civic centers, women's clubs, women's counseling centers, churches, hospitals and sometimes parks. Apartment complexes often have meeting rooms for low cost or perhaps free to tenants. Aim for a neutral neighborhood, somewhere that a lot of women with different sorts of lifestyles would feel comfortable going.

Public places are a better choice than someone's home. More people are likely to come to a public meeting place than to an unfamiliar address.

HOW DO PEOPLE FIND OUT ABOUT THE MEETING?

They find out through: community events, yard sales, and by seeing posters, fliers and notices at all the places where single parents go. The grocery store is the most obvious place. Day care centers are a close second. Think about where you, as a single mother, go often, and publicize the meeting there.

Rules about what information you can post will vary. Keep a good list about where you can put posters, sizes, etc. Some places will accept posters, others will accept only written fliers, others only the information itself. When you're asking about posting information, state clearly that the group is a new organization for single-parent families.

You may be able to find free or inexpensive printing through vocational schools, community colleges, or high school vocational programs. Call around.

The material you prepare will depend on where it's going -- large posters (let the kids draw!) for some places, 3 X 5 card notices for grocery bulletin boards, maybe regular-paper size (8 1/2 X 11) posters for store windows, a one-page photocopied information sheet for waiting rooms. Using any local statistics available can be helpful -- for instance, your library reference desk may be able to tell you how many single-parent homes there are in your city or county. The goal of your posters, fliers, etc. is to make concerned people know this is a meeting they should attend.

You may also be able to have Public Service Announcements on local radio and television stations; call and ask. Local newspapers also have columns listing community events. Information must often be sent well in advance, so be sure to call early. Remember the military bases have newspapers, too.

You may also want to write brief letters to some key people in your community who would pass information about the meeting along to single moms. Contact the local Parents Without Partners group if there is one, too.

Use available community resources to help develop your group. Call attorneys listed in the yellow pages under "Domestic Law" to see if they could speak to your group, give free tips on special topics the group should focus on, or help out in other ways.

Call the local Bar Association, legal aid society and local law school about getting basic resource materials on child support, such as journals, law review articles, and handbooks. Individuals from these associations may be willing to speak to your group, or may even volunteer some of their time to help you get started. It is important that you contact child support "experts" in your area. They know of the resources that are available to you and they can spread the word of your group to potential members and to other child support specialists, who in turn, may be able to offer your group some valuable assistance.

WHAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN AT THIS MEETING?

Your core group has to plan an agenda. You won't know until the meeting whether there will be two people or two hundred. Make a task calendar and one of you accept responsibility for calling the others to be sure everything is getting done on time. Select someone to take notes at the meeting and prepare minutes. Think of this stage as exciting rather than scary.

Be prepared. Think through each step of the meeting from the perspective of what material things are needed. You don't want your composure destroyed at the last minute when you realize something is missing.

- Gather some printed information about child support in your area.
- Have a blackboard and chalk or flip chart and magic markers to help organize ideas.
- Have on hand some name tags, pads and pencils or pens for folks who don't bring anything to write with.

SOME BASIC TOPICS FOR A FIRST MEETING

Why you are there. Talk about the basic problems you know exist in the child support enforcement system in your area and why a grassroots group can make a real difference.

What you already know. Have some printed materials to distribute. The local child support enforcement agency (IV-D office) should be able to provide you with some pamphlets; Office of Child Support Enforcement, Department of Health and Human Services, 6110 Executive Blvd., Public Inquiries, 9th Floor, Rockville, MD 20852 can send you booklets; advocacy groups such as The Children's Foundation can send you fact sheets which you can have copied; and if you've gathered specific local information, you can type it up and provide copies.

Who's there. Pass out 3 X 5 cards, or a notebook pad to take a roll so you can get in touch with people who came to the first meeting. Ask everyone to write name, address and both home and work phone numbers. People can also include any special questions and any special talents or interest they have.

What you are going to do as a group. This area is open, of course. Discuss in general the different kinds of grassroots group efforts and types of speakers that you've thought of (lawyers, judges, credit specialists who can teach you basics of tracing an absent parent, women who have handled their own child support cases in court). Projects the group could work on in your area: a workshop on support enforcement, a class on how to represent yourself in court, lobbying for judges to sponsor a "round up" of delinquent parents, and, if time commitments permit, set up a "court watch" to monitor judges' performances and to become familiar with court proceedings.

What immediate needs are. The group will need to work on publicity (using the local media if possible), programs for meetings, special projects, fundraising, and child care arrangements. Meeting some of these first needs will give you the confidence to continue your work as a grassroots group.

When the next meeting is. Set the time 2 to 3 weeks from the first meeting.

You can also have some back-up topics to discuss, but chances are you won't have time to get to them. One such issue is dues. A group does need a little money for things like printing, stamps, a post office box, meeting room rental and many more. Dues for those who can afford them are fine, but make it clear that no one is excluded if dues can't be paid. People can contribute, or you can raise money by soliciting support from other community groups or with yard sales and the like. You don't need a lot of money, but you do need some.

You might also talk about the printed resources you've collected and have available to share. You should be gathering every thing you can about the child support enforcement system. Your library is a good place to start, for copies of the state child support law, for instance.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

- Transience: Don't feel discouraged if only a handful of people stay involved. One of the oldest groups nationally existed as two or three core members for years at a time, yet their effect was very real and lasting. People will come and go in this sort of an organization, and that's fine.

• Structure: The group must be cohesive, but do realize that sometimes groups flounder because of too little structure, sometimes they petrify because of too much. You need to create more structure than jello, less than stone.

• Anger: The fury we can feel when the support checks don't come is very real. It can be immobilizing if it's not used constructively, but if it's focused and directed toward action, it can be very powerful indeed. Be smart with your anger.

Also, if you find yourself irritated at someone else's anger, remember that there was a time when you needed to be listened to. It's not helpful to a group to get stuck in angry litanies against nonpaying parents or the enforcement system, but do respect the need to verbalize frustration and remember that anger is a powerful motivater to action.

• Harassment: Some of you may already have public speaking skills. If not, there are books in the library. When you reach a point of holding workshops and giving speeches, you will need to know how to deal with hecklers.

• Blame: It's easy to get stuck blaming workers at IV-D or the courts or particular judges for the crises you face when child support isn't paid, but remember that most court and IV-D workers probably want to see you get the support money almost as much as you do. Try to gain enough intellectual distance to see where the system -- not the people trapped in it -- blocks the process. You may find that court and IV-D personnel can be invaluable allies in helping you change what is wrong with the system if you don't accept an adversary atmosphere in your dealings with them.

• Do you want to be a nonprofit organization? One of the issues you'll want to decide as a group is whether or not to designate yourselves as a nonprofit organization. The positive factors include being able to solicit tax-deductible contributions, getting special postal rates, and a certain aura of credibility. Negatives include dealing with the paperwork, conforming to a degree to a predetermined structure and limited lobbying activities. This is a good area for a small group, maybe 2 or 3 of you, to research. Also consider the pros and cons specific to your area's laws, your goals as a group, etc.

• Anti-male: Although public awareness of the child support problem has increased, your group may still be perceived as anti-male. Being aware of that can prevent your getting stuck in pointless public arguments. A good line is, "Some of my best friends are men."

• Visitation rights: You'll doubtless encounter the argument that child support isn't paid because fathers are denied access to their children. Child support and visitation rights are two separate issues. Children need their fathers' love and attention, surely, as they need love and attention from their mothers. But they also need their fathers' financial support. Advise people to encourage absent parents to spend time with their children.

Let us know how it goes. We'll help however we can -- steering you to resources for information, materials, speakers, helping you get in touch with other groups, letting women who contact us know you're out there. It's time for a "good-old-girls" network.

BE PROUD OF YOURSELF. Every effort you make will in some way make things better for mothers and children you'll never even see.

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August, 1985

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Barbara Bode
President

ISSUES IN THE REGULATION OF FAMILY DAY CARE

BACKGROUND FACTS

Although the government has significantly reduced its support for the care of children, the demand for high quality, reasonably-priced child care is growing. By 1990 nearly 12 million pre-schoolers will need such care.

Professional child care comes in two major forms: child care centers and child care homes. Home-based care is often called "babysitting" or, more accurately, "family day care".

While their parents work, at least 4.5 million children in this country spend the day in some form of unregulated child care. Of the estimated 6.2 million children in child care, only 900,000 are cared for in licensed day care centers. Some 5.3 million are kept in family day care homes, only 142,000 of which are licensed.

Despite requirements in 40 states that family day care providers be licensed, certified or registered by a state agency, less than 10% of the estimated two million family day care homes in this country are so regulated.

More than 4.5 million children receive child care in unregulated family day care homes from providers who may not be aware of basic health and safety requirements, nutrition information, or the availability of resources for children. In addition, some parents of these four and a half million children may be ineligible for child care tax credits under the "Economic Recovery Act of 1981" because it requires that child care be provided in a licensed facility if the facility serves six children or more but says nothing about homes serving fewer than six children.

State licensing standards have often reflected noble, but unrealistic, goals. Rather than encourage family day care providers to come forward in order to gain access to information, training and technical assistance (usually available at no cost to the taxpayer), strict and forbidding licensing and zoning requirements push providers further underground.

THE PROBLEM

There are two basic methods used by states to regulate family day care: licensing and registration. Licensing is the granting of formal permission by a designated state or local agency to operate a child care facility. This agency has the authority to set standards, conduct inspections to ensure that standards are being met, establish procedures for revoking licenses, and provide appeal mechanisms.

In addition to the inspections carried out by the licensing agency, local fire and health departments also conduct on-site inspections. Given limited state and local personnel, the licensing procedure is lengthy and sometimes expensive. Not only must state and local tax dollars be spent, but the provider herself often has to pay for the fire and/or health department inspections.

The common assumption is that licensed homes have been and continue to be monitored for various health and safety requirements such as fire inspections, cleanliness, emergency provisions, number of exits in the home, double sinks in the kitchen, number of children permitted in the home, fenced yards, separate cooking areas and planned child development activities. In reality:

- In 29 states, delays in on-site monitoring can mean that a family day care provider must wait for as long as one year to obtain her license or that her license will expire before it is renewed; and

- In 19 states, licensing requirements are so rigid and unrealistic that they act as a barrier to all but a few caregivers.

As a result many more than four million children receive child care in unregulated family day care homes.

Registration is a form of regulation that stresses caregiver self-inspection and parent awareness. Where done properly. the process works as follows: registration standards, generally similar to those used in licensing, are determined by the state. When the family day care provider receives information detailing the standards, she/he does a self-study to determine whether or not the standards (including fire and health standards) are met and informs the state agency of his/her findings. Parents receive a copy of the regulations and a form for filing complaints. In many instances, inspections are not made unless the state receives a complaint.

In addition, once a provider is listed with a state agency:

- She/he gains access to information, training and technical assistance (generally offered by nonprofit organizations, organized family day care provider associations, and universities, to providers who can be reached by mail).
- As the provider becomes better informed about proper nutrition, the availability of toy lending libraries and assistance from provider associations, the quality of the care improves.
- Parents can check state lists and act as their own monitors and inspectors thereby helping other parents and children as well.
- Parents of children in these providers' care can be sure of their eligibility for the newly increased child care tax credit under the "Economic Recovery Tax Act of 1981."

Whatever the preference -- family day care homes or child care centers -- it is essential to protect the health and well being of children in care as well as to protect the rights of the child caregiver. In an economy that increasingly requires parents to work, it is incumbent upon state and local officials to propose and support measures that make as many forms of quality child care available as possible.

WHAT STATES CAN DO

Children and Youth Agency

- States should establish an agency for children and youth. In some states, like Massachusetts, this kind of agency is already established in the Governor's office. The agency should also provide services that support family day care homes such as: training and technical assistance to providers; referral services for providers and parents; a list of family day care providers to corporations and businesses for use by their employees; encouragement of day care centers to support and assist family day care homes; and inclusion of providers in conference and boards of this agency.

Licensing and Registration

- States should alter their licensing and registration processes to allow for a more flexible registration process to encourage unregulated family day care providers to become regulated. All family day care homes should be required to register. Family day care homes should be monitored on a random sample and on the basis of complaints received. The state of Georgia recognized this problem and, after several years with a virtually unenforceable licensing law, switched to registration in 1980.

In Texas, when licensing was in effect, only 15 to 20 homes a month were licensed. Now, with registration, an average of 200 homes are registering with the state each month. Since registration was instituted in Massachusetts in 1974, the number of regulated homes has increased from 862 to 5,100.

- States should encourage corporations and local businesses as well as non-profit organizations, universities, etc., to work with family day care providers and/or associations in developing their child care programs.

- States should establish outreach services aimed at encouraging providers to register. This should be done in cooperation with community groups, non-profit organizations concerned with child care and associations of family day care providers.

Zoning

- States should pass legislation creating a zoning variance that permits family day care homes to operate regardless of existing zoning regulations. Minnesota is among a number of states that has passed such a law. Unless this is done, many providers will continue to operate outside of the law.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Publications

Directory of Family Day Care Associations, July, 19 The Children's Foundation, 815 Fifteenth Street, N.W. uite 928, Washington, D.C. 20005, $5.00. Annotated directory c state and local family day care associations. Introductory hapter on how to start a family day care association.

1983-84 Family Day Care Licensing Study, The Chil ren's Foundation, 815 Fifteenth Street, N.W., Suite 928, Wa ington, D.C. 20005. $10.00. Survey of state regulatory requ ements. Discussion of issues and trends in the regulation of f mily day care.

Family Day Care Bulletin, published quarterly by T e Children's Foundation, 815 Fifteenth Street, N.W., Suite 928, Washington, D.C. 20005. $8.00. A continuing review of programs, policy developments, laws and regulations.

Organizations

THE CHILDREN'S FOUNDATION, 815 Fifteenth Street, N.W. Suite 928, Washington, D.C. 20005 (202) 347-3300. Barbara Bode, President. A national organization working to ensure economic opportunity and access to decision-making processes for American families, particularly low and moderate income women and their children.

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR FAMILY DAY CARE, Sandra Gellert, President. A newly formed provider run association promoting the quality of family day care so that the best possible services are offered to children, parents and providers. Membership office: NAFDC, P.O. Box 71268, Murray, Utah 84107.

CHILD CARE RESOURCE CENTER, 187 Hampshire Street, Cambridge, MA. 02139 (617) 547-9861. Works to expand the availability of parent and worker controlled child care, providing referrals and other support services.

Revised:
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